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ABSTRACT

A study took an inside look at communicators from Russia and the United States to identify some of the factors that may influence journalists from both countries. Through joint efforts of researchers from both countries, two comparable nationwide surveys were conducted almost simultaneously in the summer and fall of 1992. The study was designed to answer the following research questions: Which roles are rated more or less important by 1,000 Russian and 1,156 U.S. journalists?; What are the major predictors of these ratings of various professional roles by Russian and U.S. journalists?; and Do they differ? If yes, how? In terms of method, the study is a secondary analysis of data collected in the two surveys. Besides frequencies and crosstab analyses to examine different groups' perceptions of professional roles, the study also tried to identify statistically significant predictors of journalists' perceptions of their roles in both countries. Results, show that Russian journalists rank their role as political agenda-setter 12 times as high as do American journalists, whereas American journalists rank the role of government investigator much higher than do Russian journalists. Further, neither Russian nor American journalists see themselves as adversarial, arrogant, or meddlesome. Also, feedback from audience is an important determinant of what roles journalists cast themselves in in both countries. (Contains 5 tables of data and 43 references.) (TB)

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Professional Roles of Russian and U.S. Journalists: A Comparative Study

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Paper presented at the AEJMC convention, 1995. Wei Wu is a doctoral student in mass communication at Indiana University, where David Weaver is Roy W. Howard Research Professor and Owen Johnson is Associate Professor of Journalism and Director of the Russian and East European Institute. The authors appreciate the support of our Russian colleagues and the Roy W. Howard Chair in gathering and analyzing these data and The Freedom Forum for its support of the study of U.S. journalists. An early version of this article was presented at the AEJMC for presentation at the 1995 convention in Washington, D.C.

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While the question of what causes journalists to make the choices they do has often been asked, no satisfactory answer has been given (Gaunt, 1992). Answers are even more wanting when attempts are made to compare Russian and U.S. journalists. Scholars have looked at the political systems, cultural background, professional constraints and newsroom socialization and training of journalists with mixed results. Some see journalists in the two countries as so different that they exemplify two polarized and "irreconcilable" systems, especially under Soviet rule (Siebert et al., 1956; Remington, 1988). Some see similarities as well as differences (Johnson & Weaver, 1994; Kolesnik, 1994; Gaunt, 1985). Some have seen an "emerging trend", that these journalists are getting more and more similar (Mills, 1982).

What do journalists really think about the roles of journalism? Are there more differences or more similarities between journalists from the two countries? It is the purpose of this study to try to identify some of the factors that may influence journalists in both countries regarding their perceptions of professional roles.

Studies of Professionalism

Professionalism has been a concept central to U.S. journalism since the late 19th Century. Yet there is a lack of consensus about what professionalism means in journalism (Johnson & Weaver, 1994; Beam, 1990). When evaluating Soviet journalists, Tolz commented that "of course Soviet journalists have not been able in such a short space of time to attain the standards of the best Western journalism. Many provincial and especially recently-created independent newspapers are not professional (emphases ours) as regards either content or appearance" (Tolz, 1992:111). However, she failed to explain what she meant by "professional journalism" or what the "standards

of the best Western journalism" were supposed to be.

The concept of professionalism has been debated vigorously over the years. Attempts at devising an index to measure journalists' professionalism have produced mixed results. Indices developed by various scholars often do not appear to be measuring the same things, leading to different conclusions about professional journalists' demographic characteristics and attitudes (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Weaver and Wilhoit find in their surveys of journalists that even journalists are not sure of the exact meaning of professionalism . The "professional spirit" of journalists has not been forgotten, but has never been fully developed, Weaver & Wilhoit (1994) conclude in their recent study of U.S. journalists.

Similarly in Russia, although journalism is one of the few occupations that have moved toward professionalization since the reforms started as Jones points out, "the process will take a considerable amount of time and we should not expect the full flowering of professions in the former USSR in just five or six years" (Jones, 1992:85). He notes that discussing the status of professions in the USSR is difficult. "The use of the term 'profession' is itself not wholly defensible" because of the disagreement among scholars as to what exactly a profession is, and which occupations can truly be called professions (Jones, 1992:86). Johnson also points out that it is unclear in Russia and other East European countries what professionalism will mean and what the role of the journalist will be. "With so many journalistic jobs in jeopardy because of financial uncertainty there has been little consideration of these issues, with so many old journalists discredited and so many new, untrained reporters flooding into the profession, the defining characteristics of the journalist are in flux" (Johnson, 1992: 221).

Shoemaker and Reese (1991) warn that the term professionalism must be used with caution.

Journalism is a field with some, but not all, of the attributes of a profession. Some even question if journalism is a profession. The answer depends on which set of criteria is used. Manoff and Schudson (1986:6) observe that journalism is "a form of fiction operating out of its own conventions and understandings and within its own set of sociological, ideological, and literary constraints." What are these constraints? Different authors make different lists. Manoff and Schudson speak of three broad categories: ideology, organizational structure, and literary convention. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) talk about routines, organizational influences, and ideology.

But some scholars contend the "ideology" of journalism is not ideology at all, if it means a set of political ideas. Rather it is the unconscious outcome of business structure, bureaucratic routine, and organizational practice (Nord, 1985). Scholars taking this approach see journalists as too constrained to make professional decisions, but these constraints come from organizational needs rather than dominant ideology (Berkowitz, 1987). Some scholars believe that education, socialization (including perceptions of professional roles that journalists acquire on the job) and organizational constraints may negate the influences of personal attitudes, values, and beliefs (Shoemaker & Reese,1991; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Gans, 1985).

Some scholars have tried to identify various criteria of professionalism for journalism (Haddix, 1990; Lambeth, 1986; Osiel, 1986; Bohere, 1984). However, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) argue that whether journalism meets such criteria is for all practical purposes irrelevant. It seems more important to study what journalists think about their professional roles and why they think so. In discussing the problems of communication research in the United States, Weaver (1988) notes that both academic and industry researchers generally have been more concerned with the media's audiences and messages than with the producers of those messages. He calls for more research on

these producers: reporters, editors, news directors, etc. Although journalists are not sure exactly what professionalism means, many journalists think of themselves as professionals, and they share conceptions of what a professional journalist is supposed to be like.

Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) observe that the opinions of journalists regarding the importance of various media roles can be considered indicators of their professional values. This is especially true for roles such as the neutral disseminator, the interpretative and the adversary roles. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) believe that communicators' professional roles and ethics have more of an influence on content than do their personal attitudes, values, and beliefs. Graber also notes that journalists who see themselves as impartial reporters of the news will behave differently from those who see themselves as partisan reformers. Depending on the professional role conceptions that media personnel adopt, she argues, the stories will vary (Graber, 1993).

Most previous studies of Russian journalists have faced a common problem: the lack of access to the Soviet media system, although two studies of Soviet journalists and their work, published in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Svitich and Shiriaeva, 1979; and Prokhorov, 1981), still provide useful baseline data, some of which was synthesized by Remington (1988). Dzirkals and her colleagues (1982) noted that the long-standing disagreements among Western analysts over the most basic points of interpretation of Soviet media stemmed from that problem:

> *At the root of the problems of interpretation is the fact that it has not been possible to have an inside look at the ways in which media material is initiated, processed, approved, and controlled. We could not look inside a Soviet editorial office to see what goes on there. Knowing only the output of the media, Western analysts inferred what they could about its meaning, but with only a vague idea about how it was produced (Dzirkals et al. 1983,3-4)*

They believed that a closer look at the Russian journalists would enhance the ability of Western analysts to draw useful inferences from the media. The contemporary and qualitatively

new demands on the Russian journalists also presuppose an understanding of their social role that corresponds to the increasingly difficult character of their activity and an orientation toward a more responsible fulfillment of their professional duty (Tepljuk, 1989).

Purposes of this study

This study takes an inside look at the communicators from both Russia and the United States. Through joint efforts of researchers from both countries, two comparable nation-wide surveys were conducted almost simultaneously in the summer and fall of 1992. Among the questions are variables measuring the journalists' perceptions of some professional roles. While promoting comparative studies, Blumler et al. (1992) also warn against a pitfall of such research: for a comparative study, things compared should be comparable. To make this more likely, the questionnaire for the Russian survey was modeled closely after the U.S. survey.

The present study is designed to answer the following research questions: Which roles are rated more or less important by Russian and U.S. journalists? What are the major predictors of these ratings of various professional roles by Russian and U.S. journalists? Do they differ? If yes, how?

In their previous study of U.S. journalists in the early 1980s, Weaver and Wilhoit (1986) found that educational experiences, age, gender, types of career paths, demographics, organizational environments and patterns of social relationships all seemed to contribute, if only weakly, to the perceptions of the importance of various professional values. Is this still true in the early 1990s? And how do these predictors compare with those for Russian journalists?

Methods

This study is a secondary analysis of the data collected in the two surveys. The U.S. study

was intended to be a follow-up to the 1971 and the 1982-83 national surveys of U.S. journalists. It followed closely their definitions and sampling methods. A random sample of 1,156 journalists was interviewed by telephone between June and September 1992 (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1993). In the autumn of 1992 in Russia, a representative sample of 1,000 journalists was drawn from 34 national and 99 regional media organizations. Instead of telephone interviews, questionnaires were distributed by interviewers and completed by the respondents independently (Kolesnik, 1994).

Besides frequencies and crosstab analyses to examine different groups' perceptions of professional roles, this study also tries to identify statistically significant predictors of journalists' perceptions of those roles in both countries, statistically controlling for other factors such as personal backgrounds,[1] social and organizational constraints. The roles under examination are the interpretive, the neutral disseminator, and the adversary roles. Based on previous studies (Johnstone et al. 1976; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986), three multiple regression analyses with SPSS were conducted with the perceptions of the importance of each role as dependent variables.[2]

Besides demographic variables, this study also included some predictors related to journalists' working conditions. A group of variables concerning journalists' evaluation of audience

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[1]The two surveys asked three questions concerning age. As Table 3 shows, we used only years in journalism as one of the independent variables to avoid multicollinearity problems.

[2]In their 1982-83 study, Weaver & Wilhoit extracted three composite dependent measures of professional roles-- disseminator, interpretive, and adversary-- from a factor analysis of 10 variables. The 1992 surveys added two more variables--set the political agenda and let the audience express their views. We tried the same factor analysis with these 12 variables but failed to produce similar composite measures. Therefore, we used the individual variables for the neutral disseminator and interpretive roles as dependent variables. But we were able to collapse the two measures of the adversary role--being an adversary to government officials and to business-- into one adversarial role as another dependent variable. The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was .82 for the Russian survey and .88 for the U.S. survey.

were also used as predictors because journalists from both the communist system (which most Russian journalists survived) and the social responsibility press system (of which the U.S. press is supposed to be the example) claim that their primary goal is to serve the public, although that claim remains questionable in practice. A battery of questions asking about influences on newsworthiness were subjected to a factor analysis to determine if they could be reduced to several composite measures. Three clusters of items emerged. Another factor analysis was conducted to construct a measure of the journalists' evaluation of their job freedom.[3]

Findings

Previous studies (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Johnstone et. al, 1976) found that the interpretive role was the dominant one endorsed by U.S. journalists, followed by the disseminator role. Similar results were also reported in previous Russian studies. Studies conducted by researchers at Moscow State University in 1970-80 found an emphasis on the ideological and propaganda functions (Kolesnik, 1994). The rank order of these roles was reversed in the 1992 surveys. They show clearly that the disseminator role is the distinct chief concern of journalists from both countries. For the Russian journalists, the interpretive role falls to a distant second position among the three roles being considered here. (See Table 1.)

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[3]Respondents in both surveys were asked to rank the influences of 10 sources on the concept of newsworthiness: peers, supervisors, friends, journalistic training, audience research, news sources, and network news and prestige newspapers. Three new variables emerged from the factor analysis. They are: audience/source influence, supervisor/peer influence, and external media influence. The two surveys also asked two questions evaluating job freedom, i.e. "freedom to select stories to work on", and "freedom to decide emphasis of story." They were collapsed into one variable "perception of job freedom" after the factor analysis. Reliability tests show all these variables have a reliability coefficient (alpha) above 0.50.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The most striking difference is the ranking of the media's role in setting the political agenda. The percentage of Russian journalists who rank that role as extremely important is 12 times as high as that of their U.S. counterparts. U.S. journalists rate the role of investigating government claims as the second most important role, nearly equal to the disseminator role and notably higher than the Russian journalists. Russian journalists rank the adversary roles a bit more important than U.S. journalists, but still lower than the disseminator and interpreter roles.

The support of Russian journalists for the role of political agenda-setter probably grows out of the tradition that elite journalists are members of the intelligentsia, and therefore are independent societal leaders. In effect, they share leadership with state officials. This could also explain why Russian journalists are less likely to rate investigating government claims as important as are U.S. journalists. Russian journalists' respect for the role of disseminator carries from Soviet days when information and facts were highly valued commodities, too often inaccessible.

In a report of a research team's recent survey of Russian journalism, Mills notes that Russian television remains the least innovative. "The Soviet Union invented the pattern for broadcasting operations in communist countries: bloated, unimaginative bureaucracies devoted to singing the praise of the system" (Mills, 1994: 66). However, our results show that Russian TV journalists are the most likely to rate the adversarial role as extremely important as compared with other Russian journalists and U.S. TV journalists. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Recent events confirm this finding, especially as evidenced in television's role in the Chechen crisis where TV's coverage by all accounts was the best of all Russian media (Erlanger, 1995; Ruchter, 1995). Direct competition among a growing number of TV channels could be a contributing factor in explaining this.

The U.S. wire service journalists top other journalists in rating the disseminator role as extremely important, while the radio journalists are the least likely to do so. The order is reversed in the Russian survey -- radio journalists value timeliness more than other journalists, with wire service journalists the least likely to do so. On the whole, it seems Russian wire service and U.S. radio journalists are the most conservative in their perceptions of the importance of various professional roles.

Except for a flurry of activity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russian wire service activity has been distinctly non-competitive. Wire service journalists in Russia are therefore likely to see themselves as simply transcribing information, rather than committed to gathering it independently. Radio journalism under the old Soviet system, in contrast to other media, was assigned the role of being the first to report the news, although in the Gorbachev years that began to change. Timeliness has returned to its key role both because of intense competition and because radio is staffed by younger journalists who find the more literary journalistic style, especially of the print media, archaic (Cowan, 1994; Bagirova and Ruzhnikova, 1984).

Predictors of the disseminator role: Similar to the results of Weaver and Wilhoit's 1982-83 study, the surprising thing is that so little of the variance in professional attitudes could be predicted by demographics, perceptions of audience, and perceptions of influences on news

judgments -- only 2 percent of the variance in the Russian survey and 3 percent in the U.S. Nothing predicted journalistic roles very strongly. However, the regression analyses do turn up some interesting results nonetheless. (See Table 3.)

Overall, when other variables are controlled for, none of the demographic variables is a significant predictor of the perceived importance of the disseminator role by journalists from both countries, which may suggest that personal backgrounds and values are overshadowed by other factors in considering the importance of timeliness. Those Russian journalists who rank themselves as leaning to the left are more likely to rank the disseminator role extremely important than those considering themselves right-wing. Russian broadcasting journalists also value timeliness more than print journalists.

For the U.S. journalists, external media influence is the strongest factor in predicting the importance of the disseminator role, suggesting that the competition of other media may be the major driving force in journalists' evaluation of the importance of timeliness. By contrast, Russian journalists appear unaffected by such competition in rating this role.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Russian journalists, who had been under tight control of the Communist Party, now enjoy much greater press freedom. Unleashed from a tight reign, they seem to view the role of job freedom as more important than U.S. journalists do. This was already evident under *glasnost* because in almost all cases the journalists who led the way in breaking new ground and sweeping away the taboos of the past were the ones who had previously been quiescent. As Table 3 indicates, the more Russian journalists value job freedom, the more important they consider the disseminator role.

Despite all these differences, there are also some similarities between journalists from the two countries. It seems both have the audience in mind when considering the importance of timeliness. The belief that their audience wants breaking news is a significant factor that shapes their concerns about timeliness. The results also suggest that journalists from both countries who believe the audience wants breaking news are less likely to rate the interpretive reporting role as very important. And for journalists from both countries the perception of the media as very influential is significantly correlated with their rating of the disseminator role, but with the other roles only in Russia. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

The broader Russian belief in media influence represents a holdover from the past, both Soviet and pre-Soviet, when many leading journalists were members of the intelligentsia and had both a leadership role in society and knew from personal contact in the power structure that their stories were read and carried influence. Newspapers less committed to influence and very similar to those of Hearst and Pulitzer in the United States were developing in late imperial Russia, but they were disdained by most of the journalist elite of the time (McReynolds, 1991).

Predictors of the interpretive role: As Table 4 shows, personal and job characteristics play a more important role in shaping U.S. journalists' perception of the interpretive role than for Russian journalists. Education plays an important part in the perception of that role by journalists from both countries. The higher the journalists' educational level, the more likely they will rate the interpretive role as important. U.S. female journalists are slightly less likely than their male colleagues to endorse this role, while there is no significant difference between Russian female and male journalists. U.S. print journalists are more likely than their Russian counterparts to endorse the interpretive role. For U.S. journalists, leaning toward the left politically is positively correlated with

their perception of the importance of the interpretive role, but this is not the case with Russian journalists. This may reflect the fact that journalists who worked during the communist period often shared a commitment to the ideas of equality evident in some readings of Marxism, and these beliefs continue to influence their thinking. Because they chafed at media controls in the past that hindered their access to news and information, they may be far more likely today to think news and information more important than interpretation as Table 1 suggests.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The perceived importance of the interpretive role is more significantly correlated with the perception of media's influence on public affairs for Russian journalists than for those in the U.S. Again, as with the disseminator role, the external media influence is a significant predictor of U.S. journalists' perception of the interpretive role, but remains a spurious factor in the Russian case. As Table 2 shows, both Russian and U.S. magazine journalists are the most likely to consider the interpretive/analytical role as very important, compared to journalists working for other news media. These weekly journals have a long history in Russia of fulfilling an interpretive role. This function was particularly evident for several decades in Literature gazeta, and during *glasnost,* in Ogonek. In 1989, used copies of these journals sold for higher prices than new copies, whose price was controlled.

Predictors of the adversarial role. The most striking differences between journalists from the two countries seem to exist in the predictors of their perceptions of the adversarial role, although it is a distinctive minority role for journalists in both countries. (See Table 5.)

Political leaning is the strongest predictor of U.S. journalists' rating of the adversarial role.

Those who consider themselves on the right are much less likely to endorse the adversarial mindset. Contrary to common sense, which views Russian journalists as highly politically oriented, Russian journalists do not seem to be affected by political leaning in their attitude towards government officials or business. But gender is a significant factor in shaping Russian journalists' perception of that role. Russian female journalists are less adversarial than their male colleagues. The cross-tab analysis also shows that while 29.3 percent of male journalists rank the role as extremely important, only 22.2 percent of female journalists do so. Similarly, 22.2 percent of Russian male journalists rank the role of being adversary to business extremely important as against 14.9 percent of female journalists who do so. But there is not much difference between U.S. male and female journalists in their evaluation of this role's importance. This difference in the Russian case may be due to the fact that women in Russia more often hold lower positions on newspaper staffs or more often work on more local media that are less political and more community-oriented.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Years in journalism turns out to be a significant predictor of the perceived importance of the adversary role by Russian journalists. It seems Russian senior journalists are more likely to assume that role than their juniors. This result runs contrary to the analyses of some previous studies, which speculate that elder Russian journalists, who were left over from the stifling old communist system, may be more conservative than the younger ones, who entered the profession after the reform started. For example, Horvat notes that in the former Soviet bloc, "there are many old, ingrained habits that make the transition very difficult. Self-censorship became second nature for many journalists under the old regimes, and remains difficult for some to escape today" (Horvat, 1991:

195). But it seems those old communist dogs have learned the new tricks pretty well or they may have known them in the past, but just could not practice them. However, the length in the profession does not make any difference in U.S. journalists' perception of the adversary role.

Educational level seems to play an important role in shaping the perception of the adversarial role by U.S. journalists. The higher their educational level, the more likely they are to rate the adversarial role very important. But educational level does not make any difference in Russian journalists' evaluation of that role. Media type remains a significant predictor for the perceived importance of this role by U.S. journalists. Print journalists, especially those working in dailies and magazines, value that role higher than their broadcast colleagues, but the type of medium one works for in Russia is not a predictor of the perceived importance of being an adversary of government or business. Many of these factors could reflect the enormous diversity characteristic of the Russian media today (Svitich and Shiriaeva, 1994).

Although there are significant correlations between the perceptions of audiences and the perceived importance of the adversarial role by U.S. journalists, when other variables are controlled for these correlations become insignificant. For Russian journalists, however, a lower evaluation of audience interest in social problems remains a significant predictor even when other variables are accounted for. And Table 5 indicates that those Russian journalists who believe in the media's influence on public affairs are more likely to endorse the adversarial function than other journalists, unlike U.S. journalists. In both cases, it seems, Russian journalists believe it is their duty to lead society more than U.S. journalists do.

Discussion and Conclusions

Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) observe that the rhetorical image of journalists that emerges in the popular discussion of the 1980s portrays them as an arrogant, meddlesome elite, bent on being adversaries. The results from this study do not support that description. The adversarial role is endorsed by a minority of journalists from both countries.

Weaver and Wilhoit (1986) find in their 1982-83 study that while the newsroom context is extremely important in all aspects, feedback from the audience is greater than might be expected. The importance of this feedback is supported by the results of this study. Both Russian and U.S. journalists who believe that their audience wants breaking news tended to hold disseminator values, while downplaying the adversarial and interpretive roles.

Leftward political leaning is a significant predictor of the perception of both interpretive and adversary roles by U.S. journalists. One explanation of this comes from Graber (1993: 13), who argues that "in the post-Watergate era direct manipulation of the political process by the media has become increasingly common. Many journalists are powerful participants in the game of politics, rather than acting primarily as chroniclers of information provided by others."

However, political leaning is only weakly correlated with Russian journalists' belief in the disseminator role, but not with the other two roles. This confirms the collapse of the communist party, as well as the weak influence of newer political groupings. Before *glasnost*, about 80 percent of journalists were communist party members. Now only 2.8 percent claim to be communist party members and only 0.5 percent belong to the democratic party. Most Russian journalists prefer to be middle-of-the-road and not be associated with any political forces (Kolesnik, 1994).

However, we can still see the traits of the role of agitator in Russian journalists. They believe more in such active roles as setting the political agenda and developing the interests of the public,

but not in investigating government claims. As Johnson & Weaver (1994) observe, what this seems to indicate is that Russian journalists see themselves playing a role as creative, independent agents in the Russian social and political context. In long-established Western democracies, an independent journalism and its practitioners have depended on established, strong political parties. Without such parties, as in Russia today, it is possible that the idea of journalistic independence carries little significance. It leaves them vulnerable to the slick political campaigns of people like the populist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, whose strong showing in the December 1993 elections surprised many observers (Hughes, 1994; and Schillinger et al. 1993).

Some scholars note that colleagues and settings strongly influence journalists (Graber, 1993). But this study shows that supervisor/peer influence is not a significant predictor of journalists' perceptions of any professional roles, after other possible predictors are statistically controlled.

Some media institutions in Russia still receive significant subsidies from the government and parties (Kolesnik, 1994). In other cases, investors, especially banks, have little or no interest in making a profit. In these cases, Russian journalists have not experienced the same pressure of competition from other media as their U.S. colleagues have. For others, this is not the case because there is much more head-to-head media competition in Russian cities than in almost any U.S. city. Although external media's influence is a significant factor in shaping their perception of the adversarial role, the reason may be that it was a common practice in the communist press for some major national media to set the tone for the other media. In most cases, it was not until those major media exposed some misconduct of the officials or business that other media would be allowed to do so.

In sum, the results of this study confirm the argument that there are no fixed models of professional journalism. Journalists' perceptions of professional roles differ with different social and political systems and media organizations. As Johnson and Weaver (1994) observe, while there are similarities between Russian and U.S. journalists, there is also a wide divergence, reflecting the different roles the media play in the two societies. The different roles would argue in favor of different understandings of professionalism among journalists in the two countries.

When we speak of professionalism, we should have in mind its two dimensions: the universal and the specific. Professionalism in any society, under any conditions, implies some general, universal principles. But at the same time professionalism cannot exist in a social vacuum. It is a relative concept determined by different historical and cultural traditions, and defined by specific political, economic and social contexts. As Carey (1986) notes, U.S. journalism is deeply embedded in U.S. culture, with its faults and triumphs characteristic of the culture as a whole. The relevance of media professionalism outside Western countries is rather ambiguous, if not contradictory (Lee, 1994). The U.S. system has been relatively stable for more than two centuries. That has not been the case, particularly in Russian, where an empire has disappeared, a political system has collapsed and a new economic system is being created.

Like many previous surveys of journalists, this study only measures journalists' attitudes and not their behaviors. Further studies are needed to examine how much effect their thinking has on their behavior. Nor does this study try to evaluate if journalists from one country are better than the other. As mentioned before, the predictors used in this study only explain a small percentage of variance of the perceived importance of three key journalistic roles. There likely are other factors that need to be further investigated. We need more comparative studies because they are system

sensitive (Blumler et al., 1992). They help us gain a better understanding and a less biased view of journalists from different systems.

Table 1. Ranking of Professional Roles as Extremely Important in Percentage and Mean

Roles	*Russia (N=1,000)*		*U.S. (N=1,156)*	
	%	X^a	%	X^a
Disseminate information quickly	81.6	3.8	68.6	3.6
Set political agenda	53.2	3.4	4.5	1.8
Avoid stories with unverified facts	48.9	3.3	48.8	3.2
Develop public interest	48.2	3.3	18.4	2.6
Concentrate on widest audience	43.3	3.3	20.2	2.6
Analyze/interpret problems	42.9	3.3	48.2	3.3
Let audience express their views	42.2	3.1	48.0	3.2
Investigate government claims	37.1	3.1	66.7	3.6
Discuss national policy	36.5	3.1	38.6	3.1
Be adversarial to govn't officials	26.7	2.9	21.3	2.5
Be adversarial to business	19.5	2.7	14.4	2.3
Provide entertainment	17.5	2.8	14.0	2.4

The scales range from 1 (Not important) to 4 (Extremely important).

Table 2. Percentage of Journalists Who See Various Professional Roles as Extremely Important by Media Type and Gender[a]

	Disseminate Info. Quickly		*Analyze Problems*		*Be Adversarial to Gov. Officials*		*Be Adversarial to Business*	
	Russia	U.S.	Russia	U.S.	Russia	U.S.	Russia	U.S.
Radio	85.0	67.3	37.3	24.8	18.3	8.0	14.3	7.0
TV	83.8	79.6	36.2	36.5	34.2	16.8	26.4	8.8
Magazine	81.8	67.2	53.0	65.6	23.8	31.7	20.0	33.3
Dailies	81.1	69.6	45.9	54.4	30.1	25.9	21.7	16.9
Weeklies	76.9	52.5	40.7	39.1	20.0	11.2	16.4	8.1
Wire	76.1	81.0	26.7	55.2	13.6	23.2	2.4	10.7
Female	82.5	70.7	44.4	47.1	22.2	19.6	14.9	14.0
Male	81.0	67.5	42.1	48.9	29.3	22.2	22.2	14.7
Total %	81.6	68.6	42.9	48.2	26.7	21.3	19.5	14.4
N	811	792	426	555	253	244	179	164

[a]Total samples: Russian = 1,000; U.S. = 1,156.

Table 3. Predictors of Perceived Importance of the Disseminator Role

Predictors	*Russia (N=1,000)*		*U. S. (N=1,156)*	
	Standardized Beta weight $R^2=.03$	*Simple r*	*Standardized Beta weight* $R^2=.04$	*Simple r*
1. Personal backgrounds				
a. Gender (being female)	-.01	.03	-.01	.03
b. Educational level	-.03	-.02	.02	.01
c. Years in journalism	-.02	.02	-.04	-.07*
d. Medium (print)	-.07*	-.06	-.01	-.05
e. Supervisory role	.02	.01	-.02	-.01
f. Political leaning (being right)	-.09*	-.07*	-.01	.01
2. Perception of job freedom	.10**	.10**	-.01	-.02
3. Perception of media's infl.on public affairs	.10**	.10**	.06*	.09**
4. Perception of audience				
a. Audience wants breaking news	.09*	.07*	.09**	.12**
b. Audience is gullible	-.07*	.02	.01	-.01
c. Audience is not interested in soc. problem	-.06	-.05	-.06	-.05
5. Influences on newsworthiness				
a. Audience/sources influence	.04	.07*	.07*	.14**
b. Supervisor/peer influence	.03	.04	.05	.11**
c. External media influence	.01	.02	.10**	.18**

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Table 4. Predictors of Perceived Importance of the Interpretive Role

Predictors	*Russia (N=1,000)*		*U.S. (N=1,156)*	
	Standardized Beta weight R=.06	*Simple r*	*Standardized Beta weight* R=.14	*Simple r*
1. Personal backgrounds				
a. Gender (being female)	.04	.05	-.06*	-.01
b. Educational level	.08**	.11**	.06*	.12**
c. Years in journalism	.05	.08*	--	.01
d. Medium (print)	.02	.03	.18**	.25**
e. Supervisory role	-.02	.02	--	.02
f. Political leaning (being right)	-.04	-.06	-.15***	-.20**
2. Perception of job freedom	.05	.07*	.05	.01
3. Perception of media's infl. on public affairs	.10**	.11**	.04	.02
4. Perception of audience				
a. Audience wants breaking news	-.15***	-.19**	-.19***	-.25**
b. Audience gullible	-.09**	-.16**	-.04	-.09**
c. Audience not interested in soc. problem	.02	-.04	-.03	-.07*
5. Influences on newsworthiness				
a. Audience/sources influence	-.05	-.01	.02	-.03
b. Supervisor/peer influence	.05	.04	.06	.10**
c. External media influence	--	--	.07*	.03

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Table 5. Predictors of Perceived Importance of the Adversary Role

Predictors	*Russia (N=1,000)* *Standardized Beta weight* R^2=.02	*Simple r*	*U. S. (N=1,156)* *Standardized Beta weight* R^2=.08	*Simple r*
1. Personal backgrounds				
a. Gender (being female)	-.10**	-.10**	-.05	-.01
b. Educational level	-.01	-.01	.09**	.13**
c. Years in journalism	.09**	.08**	.02	.02
d. Medium (print)	-.01	-.01	.15**	.20**
e. Supervisory role	-.02	.02	-.04	-.02
f. Political leaning (being right)	--	--	-.17***	-.21**
2. Perception of job freedom	.04	.05	.03	-.01
3. Perception of media's infl. on public affairs	.07*	.07*	.03	--
4. Perception of audience				
a. Audience wants breaking news	-.05	-.02	-.01	-.09**
b. Audience gullible	.03	.03	.03	-.07**
c. Audience not interested in soc. problem	.07*	.08*	-.02	-.04
5. Influences on newsworthiness				
a. Audience/sources influence	-.03	--	-.05	-.10**
b. Supervisor/peer influence	-.02	-.02	.02	.04
c. External media influence	.07*	.05	.02	-.02

*p< .05 **p< .01 ***p< .001

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